

THE QUIVER

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"A hand is laid on his shoulder,"—p. 238.

IN DUTY BOUND.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MARK WARREN," "DEEPDALE VICARAGE," "A BRAVE LIFE," ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XLIV.—THAT STEP IS REUBEN'S.

HIS dinner stood upon the table, but Sidney did not touch it; he did not even sit down to it. Cautiously, and still trembling in every limb, he crept up-stairs to his room to listen.

Amy—his own Amy—the faithful, loving soul, who had clung to him, and rested her hopes on him—Amy, the fatherless, the motherless!—is not One spoken of as the avenger of all such?

He thought she would die. He heard her feeble voice; for the door of the room was open. And then he heard Reuben. Every note of Reuben's voice struck a separate terror into the mind of Sidney.

Reuben was reading to her—verses from the Bible. There was something very solemn in the sound. It arrested even the frivolous, worldly, volatile spirit of Sidney Peters.

He stood and listened. Dangerous as the spot was—for Reuben might find him at any moment—he could not force himself away; not until the reading was over, and there were movements and footsteps that made him hastily retreat.

What had he done? Committed a crime almost as black as murder! The girl was sound in health, and full of hope and happiness a short time ago. Now it went to his very heart to think of what she was.

He knew they were poor. This man—this Reuben whom he so feared, and whom he tried to keep in the dark—was a hard-working curate, living on a scanty stipend. Amy had come to be dependent on him. He saw it all clearly—the straitened means, the sickness, the forced journey, the forlorn hope. He saw it all—the whole array of griefs and trials and privations, clear and distinct, lay before him.

He had laughed at broken hearts, and disbelieved in their existence. That soft white hand of his, so caressing and yet so cruel, had taken a bauble to play with and to beguile a passing hour, the bauble was the poor crushed heart of Amy!

Oh, he had been very vile! He thought so, as he stood within the shelter of his room, and where Reuben could not come across him. His conscience, usually so lethargic, woke up, and lashed him with a whip of scorpions.

All other phases of his existence—the late blissful hours passed with Adela, his love for Adela, the hopes he had built upon her, his disappointment, his future uncertain career—all vanished from his mind.

This little episode, taking place in a corner of the busy, noisy world, unseen and unknown of most men, riveted his attention. It was full of the deepest and most tragic interest.

Hark! and his face turns white, and every nerve trembles. Hark! that step is Reuben's!

Shall he speak to him? Shall he take one step from this place of horrors?—one step nearer to his Father's house, from which he has wandered?

If he does, it must be now. The opportunity let slip, may never be reclaimed. It will be very dreadful! It will be like coming face to face with the avenger—this meeting with Reuben Howard!

He rose up. You would hardly have known the gay, gallant Sidney Peters. He moved to the door, trembling, shrinking, and abject.

Reuben was coming. Another instant, and he must meet with him. Should he flee away? The world is wide; he might easily escape. He never need hear again of Amy!

But no! He must do something. His heart has never been so touched before. That crust of adamant is broken up. He is full of the bitterest remorse. He is in an agony to think of what he has done.

Reuben is in the passage. He is stopping to speak to the woman of the house. He is telling her to take care of Amy while he is away.

Sidney stood in the doorway, his hands clasped, his head bowed, his eyes cast down. He had become very humble. He could have lain in the dust at Reuben's feet.

The slight conversation had passed. On came the footsteps, rather quicker than before. All at once they stopped. Yes; the moment had come. Reuben had seen Sidney Peters!

Human nature is strong even in the purified breast of the Christian. This man, so mortified to the world, with every passion curbed and bridled, yet looked as if some fury had possessed him. He stood a moment speechless. Then, raising his hand to heaven with a gesture as though he would call down vengeance, "O God!" cried he, in the bitterness of his soul, "what forbids it that justice should not strike this man dead!"

Sidney shook in every limb. Was he, then, entirely condemned?—cast out beyond the reach of forgiveness?

Did Heaven's own minister, the minister of love and reconciliation, pass him by as too vile for mercy? for Reuben, with those dreadful words on his lips, was gone.

Oh, it was very terrible to feel this guilt on his conscience! It was too late, then, for restitution?

There came dimly across his mind some early readings of a Book he had neglected for years. Of those who knocked at the door, and found it closed, to open not again.

Had he not heard somewhere of a day of grace which was passed? Of a period spoken of as too late!

The man so full of resources—the subtle tempter, the gay flutterer in the scenes of folly—is on his knees.

Bitter is the groan he utters.

"Too late! too late!"

A hand is laid on his shoulder. The touch is kind and conciliatory. Reuben has come again. Not in anger. Oh, no! that has passed. The fury was not ungovernable. It raged a moment, and was then suppressed and repented of.

Who is he that, in his human infirmity, he should pass the sinner by? Is it not his office, without exception or partiality, to win souls to God?

It might seem hard to return; to stand by the man who had wronged him, and address him as a brother. If he had let his mind dwell on the fading form of Amy, it would have been harder still.

But the rather he strove to fix his eyes on One who is our great Pattern and Exemplar: and with the

power of that remembrance in his soul, he could speak words of comfort, even to Sidney Peters.

CHAPTER XLV.

MORE POTENT THAN HE THOUGHT.

"I WILL do anything—I will make any restitution in my power—only tell me!"

This was the earnest declaration of Sidney Peters. He would have gone to Amy that minute: he would have taken her to his heart. He would have cared for no impediments. His life should never be as it had been; he would enter the lists with honest and honourable men, who lived by the toil of the hand or the brain. His sloth, his giddy hunt for pleasure, his indifference to the responsibilities which attached to him, should be no more. This was a momentous period in his career. After this, things should assume a new character.

He had risen in his eagerness, but Reuben held him back. There was a mournful meaning in the way in which he checked him. It was evident he dare run no risk as far as Amy was concerned. Joy, as well as sorrow, might be fatal. He did not say so, nor did he trust himself to mention her name. It was better for him to keep that subject in the background.

He was in a position of some difficulty. He dare not leave, as he had intended. Pressing as his duties were, here was one still more imperative. He dare not trust Amy under the same roof with Sidney. He knew nothing of love—we have said so before—but one fact was familiar to him. Love was headstrong, impulsive, and often reckless. If Sidney's affection was roused—if his vehement assertions were to be believed—then it would never do to be absent; Sidney might be resolved on an interview with Amy, and the agitation be fatal.

No; he was her only protector. He would stand by to guard her to the last.

Still, it administered a vague consolation to think that this man, who had done such a grievous wrong, was penitent. A hope—visionary, he feared—came into his mind that perhaps the deadly wound might be healed—that it might not be too late to revive this drooping flower.

He knew what he must do; he must pray.

The silver waves, curling and cresting in the moonlight, the starry lights twinkling in the evening sky, were alone cognisant of Reuben's prayer. He went out to hold a few moments' communion with his God. He had been used to do so in the straits and perils of his chequered life, and this secret, holy intercourse had held him calm and anchored, let the waves be never so unquiet.

When he returned, it seemed to have come into his mind what he ought to do. The tumult of his feelings had subsided. He was self-possessed, and ready for the emergency, whatever it might be.

He had decided to let Amy know what had happened.

There were reasons for this; her fast declining health, and the danger in which he considered her to be. The remedy was hazardous, but it might arrest the progress of the heart-sickness which was consuming her. Sidney's return might save her life. But was Sidney sincere?—was his repentance merely of mushroom growth, to spring and fade in an hour?

Reuben thought not, and his experience of human nature was varied and extensive. Besides, he intended to be plain with him. There must be no hesitation or holding back. If Amy recovered, he must take her for his wife. Sidney was not the husband he would have chosen for his sister: far from it. It had been the desire of his heart to unite her to some pious and God-fearing man; but the choice had been taken out of his jurisdiction. He had only to do with matters as they stood.

He told this to Sidney, every word. He hid nothing from him of what was in his mind; and when he had done so, he stole softly up-stairs to Amy.

She was surprised to see him. She thought he had gone, some time ago.

He came and sat by the sofa on which she lay. She was very glad he had come back. She took his hand and held it in hers. She clung more fondly than ever to her brother Reuben.

"I am so lost without you, dear! I dread those days when you have to go. But I am trying not to be selfish, Reuben; I am trying to be better, and more like you. I can even read the tract now—the little crumpled tract that you cherished so tenderly. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, Amy."

"I think I am more patient than I used to be. Is it patience, dear, or as the poor bird feels when it has beaten itself against the bars till it can beat no longer? O Reuben! Reuben!" and she turned round with one of her restless sudden movements, and hid her face in the cushions.

He let her lie a few minutes. He was very pale, and his heart throbbed strangely. He had no idea what would be the consequence of the words he was about to speak.

"Amy," he whispered, and the great drops stood on his forehead; "my sister Amy, listen to me. I have seen him; the man you love."

There was a deep, an awful stillness. The soft splash of the waves was heard distinctly on the shore. Within the room, nothing!

She lay motionless. The fair hair scattered on the pillow, the white arm, once so rounded, flung back with a despairing gesture. For the moment a faint dread made his lips pale and almost livid. But he nerved himself with a desperate courage.

"Amy, I have seen him. Do you hear me, Amy? Have you forgotten Sidney Peters?"

She turned slowly round. He could see her face. He expected it to be ghastly. He thought she

might die under his very eyes—die of the mere mention of the name. But no! The loveliest maiden's blush spread itself over her features. The sweetest smile played about her lips. She looked up to him with an expression which said plainly as words could speak—

"Did I not tell you he would come?"

Reuben stooped down and kissed her. Glad tears rained from his eyes. God knows what a burden had dropped off from his weary shoulders! What a sunny gleam had lighted up this place of peril and of darkness. He could whisper to her again. He could say with a courage that astonished even himself, "Sidney is here, under this very roof!"

"Oh!" And she started up with clasped hands. The effort was too much, and she sank again, so deadly pale that he thought he had killed her! But she revived to say eagerly and hurriedly—

"Reuben, if you deceive me— But you would not, Reuben, would you? Where is he? O Sidney! Sidney!"

The passionate yearning love depicted on the girl's face, it is not possible to describe. Love of Sidney had taken hold of her very being. Was it not sheer idolatry and the creature-love that brings a snare? Looking from the high ground on which he stood, into these troubled depths, Reuben was inclined to think so.

But this part of his mission had ended. He rose and moved towards the door. Her eager eye followed him; her lips were parted. There was a look of mingled suspense, and keen expectation—an expectation so keen, that if it were protracted she might die.

But he did not mean it should be. Up to this moment the girl's fate seemed to have been in his hands. Now he yielded it to another. He took Sidney by the hand, and led him up the stairs.

"You can see her now," he whispered; and then he stood a moment and watched.

Only for a moment. He heard the cry of rapture uttered by the girl, as her lover entered. He saw Sidney bend over her, and then he came away.

His eyes were blinded with tears. He had never been so deeply agitated before.

The poor heart had found its rest, he thought. Ah! love must be very potent to play such desperate games with the affairs of men—more potent than he had imagined.

CHAPTER XLVI.

SIR FREDERIC FINDS A HAVEN.

"He said he should call again in half an hour. He seemed very much put about that you were not at home," said a servant, who had climbed up the steep staircase to Sir Frederic's secluded nook at the Tower.

Sir Frederic's face had a look of great uneasiness. He glanced round like a hunted hare.

The person referred to was Mr. Sibley. Mr. Sibley's influence and domination were beginning to be oppressively felt—that is, after the late interview with Kate Ormond, and after Sir Frederic had destroyed the letter.

He did not exactly know how to face him.

What should he do? Five minutes of the half hour were gone already, and Sibley was the soul of punctuality. He would be here directly. The more the baronet reflected on the fact, the more uneasy he became. Physical fear he knew not of; but the tyranny of the stronger mind over the weaker, made him the veriest coward. He would have fled anywhere to avoid Sibley.

What place should he go to? Need he stay to be hectorated over and browbeaten?—To be forced to disclose that he had burned the letter?

He dreaded to think of those keen, persistent eyes, and the voice that, with all its softness and urbanity, could be so sharp and cruel.

Need he stay?

He was very tired. He had been poring over papers, and reckoning numbers until his head swam. The air outside was fresh and balmy—the fields were green. Let him steal away and leave the battle unfought. At least, he should gain time—the chief resource of the irresolute.

He crept down the staircase, looking sadly like a poltroon, for all he had the best blood of the Mortons in his veins. He dared not delay to order his horse. He fled away on foot. Yes, the air was balmy—yes, it was verdant and beautiful out here. But what if he should meet with Sibley? Sibley had no end of devious paths. He was as likely as not to come upon one of them. He had better drop into some snug haven, and lie hidden till the storm had blown over.

There was a haven near at hand. Well, of all places, he had most right to go to it. He could see, where he stood, the chimneys of the farmhouse, peering from the trees.

The Meadow Farm held securely now by the Ormonds.

Would they be grateful?—would *she* be grateful? He was not thinking of Luke, or caring much either, if the truth must be told. But that firm, compact, decided little person called Kate had taken his fancy amazingly. Did he stand to her as he wished, in the light of a friend and benefactor?

He liked the idea of having somebody to befriend. He himself was literally friendless. No one cared for him; no one loved him. If he went abroad to-morrow, what kindly eyes would shed a tear? What loving hand would hold his in a parting clasp?

This is what he said to himself as he walked along.

He was scarcely right either; but he was disposed to look at things in the gloomiest light.

Should he step in through that wicket-gate? He

thinks he will. Here is a place where Sibley cannot come.

And in the garden, superintending improvements, and as busy as a bee, was Kate Ormond.

How pretty she looked! She had on the most piquant little hat with a cluster of rosebuds in front. The pink petals set off her black ringlets to perfection. She had a charming morning dress also of pink. Pink was a colour that became her to admiration. How energetic she was! Her very step was decision. She was laying down the law famously to the gardener, who was at work.

Sir Frederic walked towards her.

"I am afraid I intrude," he began in his irresolute, uneasy way. "I see how busy you are, Miss Ormond."

She turned towards him, and held out her hand.

"I am not busy at all," said she, cordially, "and if I were, I should always be delighted to see you." And her eyes glistened with an expression that softened and made them quite beautiful. "We are so grateful to you," continued she, eagerly. "You have been such a friend to us."

"Do not say a word of that," replied the baronet, feeling more than a match for Sibley, when those eyes were upon him. "I am sure I was very glad to be of any service."

"Service! oh, you have saved us from such great misery," continued she, as they walked towards the nurse.

"My brother Luke is going to be married," added she, with a little hesitation. "We have been doing up the old home for the occasion; I should like you to see it."

He walked by her side full of content. This is what he wanted—to be associated with some domestic circle, the sharer of their joys and sorrows. It was what had not occurred to him yet. He cast shy glances at her as he walked. He admired her extremely. He felt the force of her character by means of that inscrutable channel, unconscious influence. He thought her attractive beyond measure.

"See," said Kate, as she opened the glass door into the drawing-room, "all the papers in the house are my choice; my brother never can make up his mind."

"Which is just my case," suggested Sir Frederic.

"Nonsense! I shall not believe it of you. It is the worst thing in the world to be undecided."

How firm she looked as she said it! He would have given anything to be half as firm.

Especially as, all the time, there floated before him a vision of Mr. Sibley climbing up the steep staircase to the chamber in the Tower. He was sure to be there by now. Oh, yes, and to have found Sir Frederic gone.

It was very pleasant being here. He liked being

shown about by Kate Ormond, and chatted to, and made a fuss with; it was so unusual a circumstance. And to wander over the garden, and down the little meadow, all in the fresh spring weather, with the lark singing overhead, and with this most agreeable companion by his side, it was very pleasant indeed.

Still he was a shy man, and nervous to a degree. He did not abandon himself to the rest and security of the moment. He was, as Kate said to herself, all in a fidget.

He was sure he was detaining her. He thought he must go. It was getting late. She must be tired, —and a dozen other irresolute, uneasy speeches.

She was in her brightest humour. Sunshine had shone out upon the Meadow Farm, lately so much in shadow. She was grateful and light-hearted, and resolved to make him pass a pleasant hour, whether he would or no.

Go! She should not think of it, until he had tasted her gooseberry wine, and plum-cake made by her own hands. "For I am quite a working woman," added Kate, laughing pleasantly.

He did not want to go; far from it. Besides, he knew that at this precise moment, his room might be occupied by Mr. Sibley.

"And Luke will be home directly, and he wants so to see you. He will be so disappointed if you do not stay," urged Kate, powerfully. "I believe I hear him now."

It was Luke. And then hands were shaken, and hearty speeches made, and the little party were as friendly and as sociable as could be.

"Ah!" said Luke, as again they walked homewards, "there is the fence Mr. Sibley said wanted mending, and the unfortunate cow house which the wind unroofed. Did you ever happen to see that note-book of his, Sir Frederic?"

"Yes," reluctantly admitted Sir Frederic, blushing a little.

"I suppose he gave the place a sad character; but you see, Sir Frederic, there was not a word of it true."

"Don't let us talk of Mr. Sibley," said Kate; "his name always makes me shiver. Perhaps he is plotting against us now."

"I don't care if he is, so long as Sir Frederic will be our friend," replied Luke, sententiously.

Sir Frederic was gratified by these remarks. As he sat chatting over the gooseberry wine, and looking at Kate, and hearing her decided little speeches, he thought he had never passed so pleasant a morning. He wanted to repeat the visit; to come and go just as he liked; it would make his life more cheerful by far, and nobody at home would miss him.

(To be continued.)

WORDS IN SEASON.

LOOKING BACK.—II.

BY THE REV. CANON BATEMAN, M.A., VICAR OF MARGATE.

II.—APPLYING THE SPARK.



AD tendencies would often remain dormant if no spark was applied. When applied, mischief follows. The true Israelite is injured by his intercommunity with the "mixed multitude."

The mischief results from too much familiarity and intimacy with those that know not God.

Consider the composition of a mixed multitude! Not all bad, and not all good: the good not quite good, the bad not quite bad. Good and bad mingled together, and something of goodness and badness in each. There is much debatable land also, and many dwellers in it:—those who "hear gladly," and "do many things;" those who are "almost persuaded;" those who "have no root;" those who have "no oil in their vessels;" those who say, "I go, sir, and go not." Ah, yes! what dangers are incurred by intercourse with such characters.

Some men live morally enough, but they are sceptical and unbelieving. They give heed to "oppositions of science," falsely so called; they distrust Scripture; they reject evidence; they lack reverence; they deny Christ. They say in their hearts, "No God—there is no God—there can be no God—there shall be no God."

Some combine a loud profession with an inconsistent practice. Their religion wants principle; it has no support—no backbone; it sways hither and thither, and is half impulse and half curiosity. Like the Athenians of old, they pass their time in little else "but either to tell or to hear some new thing."

Some at the very beginning of their Christian course, when they first began to feel interested in religion, received a wrong bias. An unskilful or unfaithful potter sat at the wheel, gave it a wrong turn, and the vessel was marred in his hands. It has since hardened, the evil has become almost irremediable, and a vessel intended "to honour" has been turned "to dishonour."

Some are gifted with property, capacity, influence, youth, health, friends. They might do much for Christ and his Church; but some one easily-besetting sin has obtained dominion, and it ruins all; it turns one who might be an honourable, sober, upright Christian into a staggering and stupefied drunkard; one who might be good and true and chaste and pure, into a debased and degraded profligate.

Some are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. All life is a flutter, and is passed in a "vain show." They are dead to God—dead whilst

living; dead to all high aspirations and devout affections.

Some mark out a scheme of life for themselves and adhere to it with incredible obstinacy. Ten times they have seen God's finger pointing—ten times they have heard God's voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." It is the way for which they are fitted; the way of usefulness, the way of happiness: but no, it is not their way, and they will not walk in it. They lean to their own understandings, and walk by "the light of the sparks of their own kindling;" and the result is that they "lay down in sorrow."

Some lay all the stress of religion on external duties; forgetting that "God is a Spirit," and that "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Some lay all stress on internal feelings; forgetting that no building can be reared without the scaffolding—no jewel preserved without the casket.

Some live for time, some for riches, some for honour, some for ambition, some for self-indulgence, some for secret sin. You see a likeness to the Egyptians in all these; in truth, "the mixed multitude" are Egyptians, though numbered amongst the people of God.

Hence the danger. We are not commanded to abstain from all intercourse with the ungodly: nay, we are told that to do so, we "must needs go out of the world." But to seek their intimacy, to endorse their reasonings, to adopt their principles, to repeat their words, and to let them into our hearts, is very perilous. When they begin to tell us of their haunts, their habits, their pursuits, their companions; when the joke about religion is set going and kept up; when earrings are asked for to make some golden calf:—then is the time for us to shut our hands, and close our eyes, and shield our hearts. Was a religious person ever known to prize and cultivate intimacy with an irreligious person without getting harm? The effect generally is, not to excite good tendencies in the evil man, but to stir up evil tendencies in the good man. There is no chord in the evil heart which responds to what the good man says; but there is, unhappily, a chord in the renewed heart which responds to what the evil man says.

Are we, then, to refrain from all attempts to do good for fear of getting harm? Not so. But we are to avoid close intimacy; we are not to choose our bosom friends from those that are "without." Two cannot walk together except they are agreed; let all beware of the "mixed multitude."

III.—MOVEMENT FANS THE FLAME.

Bad tendencies often develop themselves by movement. It was so with the Israelites. Their journeyings seemed to stir up their corruptions.

When we are dwelling in peaceable habitations and sure resting-places; when the even tenor of our Christian course is undisturbed; when our times of devotion are uninterrupted; when our good habits are buttressed by families and dependents, then the longing and lusting after evil things oftentimes lies dormant. But the accustomed order is disturbed when we are moving from place to place; when the hour and the devotions are almost necessarily separated; when we are unknown; when what we do is unobserved. Then oftentimes corruption stirs, then past indulgences come back to mind, then the taste for the abominations of Egypt revives, and then, if through grace we resist not, we are carried captive by Satan at his will. There is not a more subtle evil than that of "making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." Men know better. Their conscience is more or less enlightened; they are not purposed to offend. Yet in their case, as in the case of others, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." The tendency to evil, if unchecked, will lead to evil. There may be nothing deliberate, nothing determined, nothing premeditated in the man's mind: but still, nestling in it, there will be a tacit and indulged persuasion that things will come about and bring him the gratification he secretly longs for. He shuts his eyes and holds his tongue, and makes his arrangements for a lawful purpose, whilst all the time he feels and knows full well that those arrangements will facilitate the attainment of an unlawful purpose. He is in movement; he is alone; the will, power, and opportunity all combine; and the "provision" made leads to the fulfilment. Let all beware of unsettled habits and a craving mind!

IV.—MEMORY SUPPLIES FUEL.

"We remember!" "We remember!" Thus spake the Israelites.

Ah, yes! that memory of things done in our days of ignorance; that memory of unrepented, unforgiven sin; that memory of innocence outraged, vice encouraged, infidelity instilled, advantages dishonourably obtained, and accusations falsely made!—what elements of wretchedness does it involve!

But memory, in the case before us, does not condemn: it beckons, invites, allures. Have we never heard it?—"Come with us;" "Cast in thy lot amongst us;" "I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry;" "I came forth to meet thee;" "The good man is not at home." Ah! memory is what we make it. If, on the one hand, we fill it with sinful images, it will hold them forth

to allure and to betray; if, on the other, we fill it with good thoughts, kind deeds, profitable reading, pure associations, it makes a rich return, not only in this life but in that which is to come. When a man lifts up his eyes, "being in torments," and appeals—not for deliverance, for that seems not to come to mind, but for "a drop of water to cool the tongue," the answer is an appeal to memory—"Son, remember!" Oh, fearful companion of a lost soul! A voice within to tell for ever and for ever of grace resisted, sin indulged, hope banished, and the door shut. It is quite true, that in spite of all that we can do, unhallowed thoughts will assault and hurt the soul; and remembrances of past sin will force themselves into the mind. In such cases the question becomes one simply of toleration or banishment. If we banish them at once—though shame may be felt and self-reproach that even where Christ reigns there should be so many enemies—no sin remaineth. The sin is when we tolerate sinful thoughts; when we let them nestle in our minds; when we turn them over and over like a sweet morsel:—we are then responsible for the consequences, and guilty of all that follows. Let us all beware of making memory corrupt!

It is plain enough then, that intercourse with the ungodly, and change of habits, tend to develop this evil tendency of *looking back*, which tendency has its chief seat in the memory. Let every reader now note its folly, for in the first paper on the subject this was spoken of.

V.—THE THREEFOLD FOLLY OF YIELDING.

What we have now to consider is the triple folly of one who has escaped from Egypt looking back and longing for its dainties. Our blessed Lord seems to have had the same idea in his mind when he said, "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God;" there is something in his character unfitting, defective, foolish.

1. It is foolish, because as much is forgotten as is remembered. It is all very well to remember, as the Israelites in the wilderness did, the "fish," and "cucumbers," and "melons;" but what of the "straw," and the "bricks," and the "task-masters?" It is all very well to speak of the pleasures of sin, but what of its "many stripes?" It is all very well to speak of the "wine when it moveth itself aright," but what when it "stingeth like a serpent?" It is all very well to speak of companions cleaving to you "in the day of prosperity," but what of their shrinking from you "in the day of adversity?" It is all very well to speak of buoyant health, high spirits, and noisy revelry, but what of the "pining sickness," and the "solitary chamber," and the "sad foreboding," and the "coming judgment?"

When a man looks back, let him take it all in! Let him deal fairly with himself and view the whole! The enjoyable side is generally seen; but the alienated friends, the ruined health, the disgraced name, the accusing conscience, are kept out of sight. Is that fair? And if a man is thus beguiled, is he not foolish? All things must be taken together; slavery must be taken with its stripes, and sin with its consequences. Suppose these Israelites, who have been kept in sight all through these chapters, had had their will; suppose they had returned, as they wished, to Egypt? what would they have found? Fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, garlic?—Yes; but what else? Stripes, imprisonment, bonds, bricks, sighs, and taskmasters!

And suppose, O Christian man, you were to leave your Lord's side, and return to the world, what would you find? Mirth, wine, wealth, dissipation, revelry;—you might drink with Nabal, and feast with Dives, and dance with Herodias, and take counsel with Ahitophel, and build great barns with the "rich fool." Yes; but what else? Hindered prayers, a wounded conscience, a forsaken cross, a dishonoured Saviour, a lost soul!

Let no one who has put his hand to the plough be so foolish as to look back.

2. It is foolish, also, because, looking back, you can neither see nor realise your present mercies. Longing for flesh, you will loathe manna. The godly man has the best of it, even in this life, on the whole; he is on the sunny side of the way; he has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come; he may have all that a child of God can wish—a happy home, a healthy body, a cheerful mind, a friendly circle, a faithful ministry, a prosperous business, a quiet conscience, an all-sufficient Saviour, a good hope through grace, a mansion prepared above!—and what can he want more? Why should he turn his eyes from this peaceful shore to look back upon the dangerous sea? He was like a merchant seeking goodly pearls; he has found the pearl of great price; he has escaped safe to land; he is in the haven where he would be! How foolish to risk the loss of that which has cost such labour! How much better to walk up and down the shore, contented, steadfast, loving, grateful, and serving God

with a quiet mind, than to be tossing, worrying, suffering, on the troubled sea which can never rest, and "whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

Keep on the shore, my friends!

3. It is foolish, finally, to look back, because the prospect before the Christian is much brighter than that behind him. Canaan is before, Egypt behind.

Are we overwrought with care and toil? Canaan is the land of rest—the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." Are we vexed with pining sickness? In Canaan the inhabitant never says, "I am sick." Are our eyes full of tears? In Canaan "tears are wiped from every eye," and sorrow, the source of tears, is unknown. Is the remembrance of sin grievous unto us, and the burden of it intolerable? In Canaan they walk in white, and nothing enters that defileth. Are we solitary, friendless, forsaken? In Canaan One abideth who "sticketh closer than a brother." Have we none here to love us? There, the very element they breathe is love—"God is love," and all are like him, for they see him as he is. Does praise from the full heart even here sound sweet? What must it be to join the choir above—the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, who with one accord join in the "song of Moses and the Lamb?" Have we here, even in the "dark and cloudy day," glimpses of spiritual enjoyments, tastes of the comfort of the Holy Ghost, intervals of communion with the Lord we love, anticipations of the glory that shall be revealed? What, then, will it be when we eat of the trees bearing twelve manner of fruits; when we enter through the gates of gold; when we rest by the crystal sea; when we put on the white robe, and strike the harp, and wear the crown; when we join the innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, and when, with unclouded vision, we "see Him whom unseen we love?"

Oh! what can a backward look at the world be in comparison with this foresight of the land of Beulah!

May God give grace, that none who read these lines may be so foolish as to give way to the tendency, of which the history of the children of Israel gives us such sufficient warning.

A S E A - S O N G .



WAVE, upon a loneliness of shore
Fell o'er:
The proud race ridden, the high tower-
ing crest,
Deprest;
And just a bit of sea-wrack in its hand,
A strand
Upon the sand; come all that weary way
To lay

Its handful there. Such is the poet's life—
A strife:
Vast aspiration—a proud arch of neck,
A wreck:—
A few poor weeds, of all it had amassed,
Just cast
Beyond it, and abandoned on the shore—
No more.

DIGBY P. STARR.



(Drawn by H. PATERSON.)

"He made way for me."—p. 263.

ROBIN GOODFELLOW.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

PART II.

ONE morning Robin was in tears. He could not learn his lesson. I called him to me, and before he left me he knew it thoroughly. Thenceforth he came to me daily, and between us we contrived that he should make a great start before the holidays were over, so that when school re-commenced he went up to the top of his class. Thenceforth he continually visited me out of school hours, and we became exceedingly attached. I should say sympathy was the cause of my great influence over him; I did not pretend to be interested, but was really interested in what interested him. Also we had long talks about things and places that he listened to with delight. He thought my stock of stories inexhaustible, and I found them the means of introducing many little bye-truths and morals. He loved to turn over my picture-books carefully, and get me to explain them to him. An old illustrated edition of Goldsmith's Geography, almost as thick as it was wide, was a special favourite of his; also "Robinson Crusoe," the "Travels of Roderick," and sundry of my juvenile books that I had carefully preserved. I must specially include Robert Bloomfield's charming little idyl, "Little Davy's New Hat," which I wish were not out of print. I think he identified me with Miss Wideland, as I did him with little Davy.

Mr. and Mrs. Thatcher were extremely pleased and grateful, though I told them they owed me no thanks for my teaching; it amused me. They said I made Robin fond of learning, and it would be of advantage to him all his life. When, at Christmas, he received two prizes, one for proficiency and one for good conduct, their gratitude was enhanced.

But Robin was not one to enjoy a good thing without sharing it. Early in our intimacy, he came in hand-in-hand with his little friend Polly, and implored me to be so very good as to teach her too. But after the first novelty Polly had no mind to be taught, and would soon run away. In vain Robin ran after her and impressed on her the advantages of study; she would struggle herself free, even with the desperate aid of a cuff; and he would return to me with a disconcerted look on his good-natured face. I said, "Never mind, Robbie, she is but young yet, and rather interrupts us." This did not quite satisfy him, and by dint, I think, of private admonitions and coaxings, he got her to come pretty regularly; but I used to let her off after a very short confinement, which satisfied us all.

Meanwhile the good old vicar called on me, and

finding me willing for a little parish work, found various ways of making me useful. This gave great interest to my quiet life; I had always some light duty to fulfil or to think about, and now and then in the evenings I played hymns on the accordion.

Another summer came round; and one day, when I was quietly at work, the handle of my glazed door was unceremoniously turned, and a cheerful voice said—

"Mrs. Thatcher, I'm come to look after my accordion and straw hat!"

Of course, it was Mr. Knight. He gave a great start, and said, "Miss Rivers here! I beg ten thousand pardons. I had no idea my old quarters were occupied—and by you!"

I felt awkward, and said, "Perhaps you wanted to come back?"

"Oh, no, no," said he, laughing, and sitting down on the edge of the nearest chair. "I'm at the Potteries, doing duty for an invalid friend. I've only run down here to supply Mr. Browne for a couple of Sundays while he takes a parson's fortnight at the seaside, and so I thought I would look up Mrs. Thatcher. I hope you'll forgive my intrusion," and he rose.

"Oh, pray don't call it intrusion," said I; and then paused, not knowing what to say next.

"You like your lodgings, I hope?"

"Very much, thank you."

"You *must* like the Thatchers, they are very nice people."

"Very; and little Robin."

"Oh, yes, Robin Goodfellow; I must look him up too. By-the-bye, if it had not been for you, he would have had a watery grave."

"If it had not been for *you*—"

"Oh, I should have been quite too late if you had not held him up; besides, your scream summoned me. Well, I'm glad we got him out—he's a fine little chap."

"And such a good boy. He comes on famously now at school."

"Does he? I fancied he had been rather dull in that line. I had great difficulty in teaching him to find round O."

He was moving off as he talked, and I without courage to ask him to stay, followed him to the door, and thence a little way into the garden.

"Oh, there he is! there's Robin Goodfellow," said Mr. Knight, laughing, and pointing his stick towards the beehives, close to which were nestling the children in deep confab. "Hallo, young gentleman! if you and Polly get the bees to settle on you, you must expect no help from Miss Rivers

and me. Drowning is one thing, but stinging is another."

And he smiled at me and walked off, while Robin made a joyous rush at him and received a pat on the head. They passed on, hand in hand.

I was invited to drink tea that evening with Mr. Browne and his widowed sister, Mrs. Finch, who was going with him to the seaside. Mr. Knight was there too. It was a very pleasant little party. The next fortnight was very pleasant too. Mr. Browne sang my praises as a cottage visitor to Mr. Knight, who believed all he said, though it was a great deal too much. He came up to me one day, however, and said—

"Miss Rivers, I have a bone to pick with you. Don't look frightened. But mind you don't spoil Robbie by teaching him things quite out of his sphere. Here has he been telling me that Homer was blind, Milton ditto; that Shakespeare wrote all about that wicked Jev who wanted the pound of flesh, and poor old King Lear and his three daughters; and the regue gave me very good epitomes of their stories too. Is that the kind of lore for a labouring man?"

I said, "What is the kind of lore?"

"Humph! Well, you puzzle me. Bible history, I think; and practical things."

I said, "He has that too—surely one does not supersede the other. Does it with ourselves?"

"Why, no! perhaps you are right and I am wrong; but I so hate merely entertaining knowledge superseding solid acquirements."

This checked me a little; but I could not feel that I had done Robbie any harm. His wits being sharpened by pleasant knowledge, more readily received what was harder to master. What surprised and amused me was, that he orally imparted so much to Polly, that she, with very little reading, kept pretty good pace with him.

The cheerful fortnight ended; I felt rather flat. Mr. Browne came back very shaky, and unequal to his duty. Mr. Knight, being released from the Potteries, came to help him. It needs not to go over all the steps that drew us closer and closer to each other. Dear old Mr. Browne was very desirous that things should be as Mr. Knight wished; and so was Mrs. Finch. So kind as they were to me, how could I fail to be influenced by them? And besides, I was beginning to see things very much as they did.

In short, when Mr. Knight came to the point, I was not so much surprised as agitated and happy. I thought myself a very fortunate young woman, and felt very grateful to him. But we had to wait a little, and he was summoned away for a time, and then came back; and though nothing was positively settled, we had a delicious time of it.

Poor old Mr. Browne died, and his successor did not want a curate, so Mr. Knight was adrift for a

season. At length he got a small cure, on which we thought we might live, with my hundred a-year in addition. So we married and were very happy.

That may be supposed the winding-up of my life's romance, though I do not feel that it was so. Years flew by like days; we had plenty of work, and work that we liked. Mr. Knight was always loved and respected wherever he went; and the partiality for him at Hedgelands was such, that when, after several years, Mr. Browne's successor was preferred to a wealthier living, it was a matter of general rejoicing that Mr. Knight was the new Vicar of Hedgelands.

We were nearing middle age when we took up our abode in the dear old vicarage, but healthy, heart-whole, and feeling younger than we were. Looking younger, too, each told the other

Robin Goodfellow had meanwhile left school and become a carpenter. He had sprung up into a fine promising youth. We greeted each other with great cordiality, tempered on his side with graceful respect. Just as he was taking leave, I said, "Well, and how goes on Polly, Robin?"

Instantly he coloured up as red as fire. "She's very well, ma'am;" and not another word. I saw how it was with him, and did not pursue the subject.

"You may borrow books of us now, Robin, whenever you like."

"Oh, thank you, ma'am!" and his face glowed with pleasure.

"What would you like to have?"

"Anything about Canada or Australia, please."

I lent him a book about each, and we had a desultory talk about the colonies.

When I called on Mrs. Thatcher, she was warm in her praises of Robin's good conduct. There never was such a son, she said. "But, there! there must always be a thorn somewhere."

"What was the thorn now?"

Oh, she didn't want to speak of it, but Robbie was always wanting to go to foreign parts; and if he did go, she knew it would break her heart; that it would!

When I told this to Mr. Knight, he said, "Did not it give you a twinge? Who has fostered Robin's hankering for foreign parts, if you have not?"

I felt guilty, and said, "I only used to show him pictures and tell him about manners and customs."

"And take imaginary voyages and travels on the map, and invent shipwrecks and disasters at sea and on land, and conjure up sharks, and sea-serpents, and mermaidsens—"

"Oh, no, no—"

"I say, oh, yes, yes. You gave him an ideal, which reality never can reach."

I was very sorry to think I might have done so, and looked so grave that Mr. Knight laughed.

In a very short time Robin came to change the books.

"Robin, you must have skipped. You cannot have read those two thick books in this short time."

"Yes, indeed, ma'am."

"You must have sat up late."

Robin looked a little ashamed. "Not very late—not later than you do, ma'am."

"Oh, well, that's not very late. What will you have now? The Successful Merchant?"

"Please, ma'am, I'd rather have some more about the colonies."

"I don't know what to say to that, Robin. Suppose reading about them should unsettle you a little, and make you wish to go abroad."

"Perhaps I might do a worse thing, ma'am. Work's often slack here, and there's plenty of it there, and good pay."

"That depends. Sometimes the market is overstocked."

"But here it's almost always overstocked."

"You are not out of work now."

"Oh, no; but I may be, some day."

"Wait till that day comes."

"Would that be wise, ma'am?"

"Yes, I think so. We should do the duty that is nearest to us. Yours is to please your master and make your parents happy."

"I hope I do both," said Robin. "But I may inform my mind all the same."

"Inform your mind by all means, but don't unsettle it."

Robin looked rather troubled, and said, "It's unsettled already. I'm trying to quiet it. Then I mayn't have any more books, ma'am?"

"I did not say that. Have books by all means. There, go to my bookcase and choose for yourself, there are none that can hurt you."

With a grateful look he obeyed; and after an intent examination, he selected two, still about the colonies.

"May I have these?"

"Yes, and welcome. What has unsettled you, Robin?"

He gave a wince. "Oh, nothing to tell of," he muttered, and hurried away.

His mother wept when I saw her next, and said she was sure Robin would go; he would never settle down again.

On a fine Saturday evening, I was returning from visiting a sick cottager, and paused at the gate of the pretty church field, to look at the cricketers and the boys flying their kites. On a bench that seemed for

"Talking age and whispering lovers made,"

I saw Polly sitting between her mother and John Willis. Robin was leaning over the gate, and started as I came up. He made way for me.

"Don't open the gate, I want to watch this pretty scene. Don't go away, Robin."

He remained, only moving a few feet off.

"It is a pretty scene. Why, that's Polly under the hawthorn, is not it? Who is that with her? John Willis? Oh, he is resting a little. She does not care for him, I suppose?"

"I think she do, ma'am" (in a low voice).

"Well, I should have thought she had better sense. Oh, I can hardly think it. He is joining the others now. Well, how about the books? Do you like them as well as the others?"

"They give a very different account, ma'am. Of course, there's a dark side to everything. But I knew I must rough it a bit."

"You? do you mean you are going out?"

Robin hesitated. "Well, I've thought of it."

"But you have not thought how it would vex your mother. It would wear her heart out. No riches would repay you for that."

"Oh, I was not thinking of riches," and his eyes glistened.

"What were you thinking of, Robbie? You and I used to be such good friends. You used to tell me all your little affairs. You will never see such a pretty scene as this in the bush; the old English church, as old as King John; the old oaks and elms, and your pretty cottage, with its date of 1642 peeping out between them, and your mother in her white apron at the gate. You will not even see a daisy. Are you tired of old England?"

He edged closer, and almost whispered, "No, I'm not tired of it; but tired of wearing my heart out."

"Well, Robin, I guess how it is; but be a man. If it can't be helped, never mind it; but very likely it can."

He raised his eyes. "How?"

"You are very likely downhearted without cause. Are you sure it is not so?"

"I'm sure" (very huskily) "she likes John best."

"Have you asked her?"

"Oh no; but she said of herself one day in a pet, 'I like John ever so much better than you.'"

"Why, you've explained all in one word. She said it in a pet. Very likely she has since wished she had bitten her tongue through first."

"Do you think so, ma'am?" (with a gleam of joy.) "But no, I can't think it. And Jack gets good wages, and they can marry and be happy, and I'll just go out of the way and not be a hindrance."

"Just do nothing of the sort. You will be very foolish—which I have never thought you yet—if you do not have an explanation first. Just ask her, in an honest, manly way, whether she will share your lot. If she is the girl I think her, she will give the right answer; if she really prefers John, then let us take the emigration scheme into consideration and give it our best attention."

I held out my hand as I spoke, and shook his cordially.

"Well, I will then," said he, brightening. "You

always give me good advice. I want folks to be happy; only I can't stand by and see it."

"I hope to stand by and see *you* happy, Robbie."

We exchanged smiles and parted, each walking briskly along our several ways. I put up a fervent little prayer for the good, unselfish fellow's success. I thought if Polly were true-hearted, succeed he must.

Nor was I mistaken. The following evening, before the triple chime rung us to church, I was again returning from my poor sick parishioner, to whom I had been reading. The bells seemed to say—

Come and pray—come and pray;
Don't delay—don't delay;
All must die—all must die;
You and I—you and I.

Just then I heard very tender tones on the other side the dog-rose hedge; and a rejoinder, in accents of emotion—

"To Canada? Yes! Why, I'd go over the wide world with you, Robbie, if need were!"

My heart gave a joyful bound. The dear fellow! he had found her as true to him as he had been to her. There was no more talk of the colonies after that. My books were returned next day in my absence, neatly tied up in brown paper, "with Robin's respectful thanks." My husband laughed at me finely for my share in the matter; but "let those laugh who win." After a few happy, hopeful months, the banns were put up, and he married Mary Perry to Robin Goodfellow.

"SOMETHING ABOUT A SOLDIER."

A STORY FOUNDED ON FACTS.

SOMETHING about a soldier, must it be? Ah, well, it's not all glory and fame that falls to a soldier's lot; there's more heart-breaking and desolate homes than all the glory in the world could atone for. For after all, the glory doesn't last long here, and I doubt whether in that other world, God would think it a glorious deed to have killed one's fellow-creatures.

"Many years ago, there lived a widow woman, with her only son. This son was her pride and joy, and she had devoted her life to bringing him up in the fear of the Lord, hoping that as the years stole upon her, he would be at her side, to comfort and care for her; so that she might rest, if need be, from her toil.

"For many years a dreadful war had been waging. For a long time it was nothing but the rumours of disasters that reached the widow's quiet village; but afterwards, men called recruiting sergeants came about, persuading the young men to become soldiers. They used many powerful arguments, so that numbers of the most promising joined the army, possessed with the idea that a glorious career awaited them.

"Alas for their hopes! Many of them never came back to their homes, and those few who did, brought with them shattered health and broken limbs, as the reward of the toilsome years.

"Little did the widow dream that while she was bemoaning the madness of those who were leaving home and their loved ones to battle for themselves, her own darling was meditating the same step. He was constantly hearing of the glories of war, till at last his head was so filled with the theme that he could think of nothing else. While his mind was in this state, a recruiting party got hold of him, and found little difficulty in persuading him that it was his duty to enlist in the glorious cause of freedom for

himself and countrymen. In a moment of indecision, he yielded to the temptation, forgetting the duty he was leaving behind him.

"Afraid for the effect on his mother that his news might cause, he did not tell her, but left his home in the dead of the night, stating in a letter he had placed on his dressing-table, the reasons of his flight.

"I cannot speak of the poor mother's grief, but I know her heart was near to breaking; but she was obliged to rouse herself. She had now to work additionally hard to keep the wolf from her door; for though there were many great victories won, and every one said that they were glorious ones, too, the poor inhabitants suffered very greatly.

"Bread and all kinds of provisions were higher-priced than they had ever been known before, so that it was a hard matter to live. Farmers did not think of their farms, but only of the war; and when the harvest-time came there was very little corn.

"Two years passed, and the war waged as furiously as ever. The scarcity had grown into famine, and bread was sold at two shillings a loaf; also it was much harder to obtain two shillings than it is now, and the poor widow was reduced almost to starvation.

"Those were dreadful times, surely enough, and people said that a curse must be on our land, and wondered what would come next, and others thought that the time spoken of in the Bible had come, and no wonder, poor things, that they were disheartened and frightened. There had never been such a war for many a long day.

"Meantime the widow had heard once from her son. He wrote saying he had undergone many hardships and privations, but he should be better off now, for he was married.

"Whether to be glad or sorry at this intelligence she did not know. She hoped that he would be

better cared for now, but it seemed very hard that she should be so lonely, and he so happy and forgetful of her in his new-formed tie.

"She had waited and watched, and watched and waited for his return, when an event occurred that in some measure diverted her attention from her overwhelming sorrow. One evening she was much startled by seeing the door unceremoniously opened, and a woman standing in the doorway.

"If you'll spare a crust of bread to a poor starving creature, I'll show you the finest head of hair as you ever set your eyes on," the woman said, before the widow had recovered her surprise.

"A crust of bread you're welcome to," she answered, for poor though she was, she was always ready to help another still poorer. Accordingly she set before the stranger a piece of bread and a mug of water, the only fare of which she had herself to partake.

"The woman untied the shawl which had formed the cradle for an infant not many months old, and taking the child on to her knees, she began to eat heartily the food before her. When she had finished she did not seem inclined to move. At last she said, 'You won't be turning me out to-night, I'm thinking; I've not got a shelter for myself or the child, poor wee thing! it's nearly dead of the cold now.'

"The widow demurred for a little while; but her religion was an active religion, and she had not the heart to turn the poor things out into the bleak night air; so she told the woman she might stay, and have the room that her poor son used to have before he went to the wars.

"Did you lose a son in the wars?" she asked, when she had thanked the widow.

"He 'listed' and went away four years gone," answered the poor mother; "and it's near two since ever I heard from him."

"Ah! these are bad times for us women," continued the stranger. "They've brought me low enough. I used to live a little way from Dover, where the army was stationed; and father used to send provisions sometimes to the men, so that we saw a good deal of them. There was one that seemed so much better than the rest, such a good young man he was, and by degrees it went on till he wanted to marry me. Father and mother were very hard upon us, and would not hear of my marrying a soldier; so as I was very wilful, I ran away from home, and we were married. I soon found out that if I had followed their advice, it would have been better for me; and often have I bitterly regretted my folly and wickedness. My life was anything but an easy one; but I should not have minded that so much. One day my husband came to the lodgings which he had taken for me, and told me that his regiment had been ordered to a place many miles away across the sea. I comforted myself that I could follow him; but how ignorant I was. He soon showed me that that

was impossible, and although he was kinder than ever to me, I could think of nothing but my hard lot. At last the time came for our separation, and after he had gone I set about thinking what I could do. I tried to get work, but that was harder to do than I thought for; and the people were so badly off that they could not afford to pay me much. I was even then too proud to go to my parents for help; I thought perhaps I might do better if I went into the country more, but I found that there the war was felt as much as in the towns; so I have gone on from place to place, earning a day's living here and there, till at last I have come here, obliged to get a bit of bread for the last few days by showing my hair, for in truth, though I say it, I never saw any like it." Saying which, the woman loosened a close linen cap which she wore, and disclosed a mass of hair, which tumbled and turned till it trailed actually on the ground.

"The widow lifted up her hands in amazement, 'How wonderful!' she exclaimed.

"The stranger smiled mournfully as she said, 'I never thought I should have come to showing it for a morsel of bread.'

"Hadn't you better go to bed?" hastily exclaimed the widow, anxious to divert the woman from her sorrows.

"Thank you; I will," returned the stranger, and wishing her hostess good night, she quitted the room.

"The next morning, as the stranger did not make her appearance, the widow, thinking that she had overslept herself from the fatigue she had undergone, went up to call her. She received no answer but the wailing of the child; so, fearful that something had happened to the mother, she opened the door and went in.

"No trace of the mother was to be found; she had disappeared, leaving the child behind her.

"At first the widow was filled with anger at the ingratitude of the woman and her want of love for her child; but she soon saw through the love which had prompted the action, and even found excuses for its undoubted wickedness.

"Likely enough the mother could not bear the thought of its dying from cold and hunger, and so had fled, to battle on for herself, content to leave her child in the hands of a stranger, with the thought that it would be better cared for than she, in her straits, could care for it.

"So the widow took the child and brought it up, loving it as though it were her own child; and a bright clever boy he grew to be, doing odd jobs for his old friend as well as could be. No more was heard of his mother by the widow; but she always took care to tell the child about her, and her love for him.

"Why——"

"Hush—hush! don't interrupt. The child took to

calling the old woman granny, and she used to love the name, for it brought to mind her own son far away.

"One day when the little boy was playing in the field, a very poor man came to him and asked for something to eat.

"Granny, granny——"

"Hush! I shall never finish my story. The child came running in to ask for something for the poor man, and the widow took a piece of bread out to him.

"He looked very hard at her for a moment, and then——"

"What then, granny?"

"They both knew each other. He, her son, begging and in rags; looking like an old man, and she, his mother, whom he had never seen for ten years. Of course, she took him in, and laid him on his own old bed, and nursed him, for he was quite broken down.

"They were so happy together, the mother and son, and as he lay on his sick bed he told her of his life since he left his home, how he had married and been ordered away, so that he was obliged to leave his wife behind him, and never knew what became of her. Then he went on to tell his mother what she was like, till a thought struck her, and she asked him eagerly if she had any feature by which she might be known.

"Her wonderful hair," he answered.

"Truly the ways of God are past finding out. A little explanation and comparison of events, served to show the mother that the stranger she had taken in was her own son's wife; and had she not had a very large reward for the little she had done, to have been allowed to shelter her son's child? And for the son, how thankful must he be for the goodness which had led his child to the best friend it had on earth!

"How swiftly the days passed to the happy mother and son! but it was not to be all happiness. The widow soon saw that her son had come home to her only to die. Daily he grew worse, till at length he died, leaving his poor mother once more alone, save for the child."

"Why, granny, dear, usen't you to tell me of my mother? and didn't the man come to me for some bread?"

"Yes, George, my boy, it was your father, and though you always called me 'granny,' you didn't think I was your grandmother, did you?"

"No; but why didn't you tell me this before?"

"You were too young at the time to understand about it, and afterwards my heart was so sore, I could not bear to speak of it; and I don't suppose I should have done so now, only you frightened me by saying you wanted to be a soldier."

"But did you ever hear of my mother again, granny?"

"Never, though I made many inquiries. I hoped that she had gone to her parents, but I never knew."

"Is it wicked to be a soldier, granny; isn't it one's duty?"

"Not wicked, my boy; but about its being a duty, young men mostly think it a duty, because they think it's going to make them great, or because they like the excitement, and they forget that they are leaving a duty undone, when they run away from the work God has set them."

"Yes, granny, I see; and my duty is very plainly to take care of you who have been so good to me; and I will never forget my duty, dear granny."

"I would never wish you to stay here against your will, George; but I thank God that he has put it in your heart to find out your duty, for I think you have found it by his grace." L. M. C.

"THE QUIVER" BIBLE CLASS.

125. A prophet who went to find a girdle on a river's bank.

126. "Hats" are only once mentioned in the Bible.

127. A widow's vail which was filled with food by a great man.

128. Two men whose lives were preserved by flax.

129. What were the dimensions of the ark in English measure?

130. Of what tribe was the Prophet Daniel?

131. What are the names of the gates of the city Jehovah-Shammah?

132. What family of priests kept God's ordinances when all the rest of Israel went astray?

133. A man who is said to have had a "tender love" to another.

134. A priest who reproved his daughters for ingratitude.

135. A father who was forgiven for not doing his duty, because he pleaded as an excuse a great grief which had fallen upon him that day—the slaying of his two sons.

136. A man whom a lion slew because he refused to smite a prophet.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 239.

117. 1. Sam. xi. 2.

118. 2 Kings i. 9, &c.

119. 2 Kings xv. 5.

NEW BOOKS.

IT was remarked to us the other day, and is often repeated by people who know no better, that to please the masses an author must write either comic trash or dabble in sensationalism of the lowest and vilest kind. We are aware that there is a bare show of truth in this, when we note the enormous number of publications of that description; but we feel it to be our duty and our privilege to protest against such a libel upon the tastes of the people. There are lying before us now three small books,* all from the same pen, and to these we may refer in refutation of the opinion to which we have alluded above; not that they are the only proof of its falsity, but they serve as an example. These simple and pleasant stories have been written expressly for the people, and in them the author has aimed to amuse and interest, but also (and pre-eminently) to counsel and instruct, with what success all those who have read Mr. Power's former works will well conceive. Mr. Power has a happy style entirely his own, and his writings have a popularity among the class for which they are principally intended, that has seldom been rivalled, and never surpassed. The impress of truth is upon every page; the scenes in his stories are no fancy pictures, but are undoubtedly drawn from actuality; his portraits are not painted dummies, but breathe and move as the men and women do from which they are taken. The incidents narrated are such as happen every day of our lives. The sayings and doings, the jokes and the blunders, the joys and the sorrows, are those of the Smiths, Browns, Joneses, and Robinsons—folk whom everybody has seen and knows. The writer does not make the least strain for effect. If Mr. Smith trips and falls, he is not suddenly provided with a commodious feather-stuffed cushion, wherewith to soften the calamity; nor, on the other hand, is Mr. Jones ruthlessly pitched head foremost into a bog. If it happens to Mrs. Brown to lose her way, there is no pleasant short-cut at hand to take her without trouble into the right road again; while Mrs. Robinson is not needlessly obliged to go all the way to John o'Groat's before she may travel to Land's End. And yet the writer is never commonplace. He has the knack of throwing a new light on an old subject; opening it well that you may look within, and turning it round so that you may see the other side of it. *Apropos* of the phrase "turning round," we may quote as a specimen of Mr. Power's style the following passage, which we take from the little book, entitled "It only Wants Turning Round:"—

"There are two sides to everything," said Mr. Plumb, the village grocer,—"two sides whichever way you look at things—there's a top and bottom to most things; that's my opinion—and there's an inside and an outside to most things, that's my

* "Sambo's Legacy," "Born with a Silver Spoon in his Mouth," "It only Wants Turning Round." By the Rev. P. B. Power, M.A., late Incumbent of Christ Church, Worthing. London: William Macintosh, Paternoster Row.

opinion too—and there's a front door and a back one to every house—and there are two sides to every question, if I don't very much mistake; and I don't think I do make a mistake. It isn't often that John Plumb makes a mistake—that isn't much in his line; he hasn't gone through life winking and blinking, and looking at his toes. I expect he had a pair of good eyes, and used them too; and he'd recommend you to do the same;" and so saying, this decided little man looked round on the assembled company, to see whether even a distant thought of contradicting him were rising in the mind of any of his hearers.

These consisted of some of his neighbours, who had assembled round his window to read a bill, which stated that "owing to the depressed state of trade, the manufacturers in the neighbouring town must, for the present, take ten per cent. or two shillings in the pound off the weavers' wages."

There was much talk—much murmuring over this bill; and the grocer had come out in consequence; and delivered himself of the speech which the reader has just now heard.

As no one gave signs of contradicting Mr. Plumb, he proceeded farther with a statement of his opinions.

"You can't make a pair of trousers, Mr. Snip," said the grocer, addressing the village tailor, "but they have a wrong side and a right."

"Of course not," said Mr. Snip meekly, remembering how long a score he owed to Mr. Plumb's.

"And the world don't go straight on without turning round and round; does it?" said the grocer to the schoolmaster.

"Certainly not," said Mr. Gremmer, "I should think not, indeed. To liken this world of ours to a human being, he might be said to be turning himself round to the sun to warm himself by day, and then to be turning into bed at night."

"I thought so," said Mr. Plumb, "and the consequence is, he keeps regularly at his work, and makes no signs as yet of giving over; and it would be well for people if they followed his good example. Believe me, there are two sides to that bill," said Mr. Plumb; "there's *your* side, which is the only one you can see; and there's the *masters'* side too; and you should look at the one as well as the other. Now you can't see the top and bottom, or the inside and the outside of a thing at the same time; and if you want to know what the masters think, you must put yourselves in the masters' place."

Mr. Power need never fear that he can write too much, for he always succeeds in providing sound, wholesome, and pleasant literature.

A very beautiful and very acceptable book has just been issued under the title of "The Child's Bible,"* in a brief introduction to which the scope and objects of the work are explained. The editor of this volume points out that the system heretofore adopted, of re-writing Bible stories for the young, is open to two grave objections: they present only isolated fragments of the Sacred narrative, and they give the child its first acquaintance with Scripture truth in other than the grand yet simple language of our English Bible. "The Child's Bible" is open to neither of these objections. It is a consecutive arrangement of those portions of Holy Scripture best suited to the wants and capacities of children, in the words of the Bible itself. The publication of this work is indeed a great boon to all those who desire their little ones to become early acquainted with the truths and the language of our Bible. The work is superbly illustrated throughout, and no expense has been spared to make it the most attractive, as it is indeed the most valuable, gift that any parents can give to their children.

* "The Child's Bible." London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin.